

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

Prayer – Talking with God in Life's Worst Situations
Psalms 3; 4; 71

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Bible Study Leader:

Ensure that each youth has a copy of the Bible study application for youth ("Take Ten!!).

Worship Time Leader:

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Prayer – Talking with God in Life's Worst Situations – 25-52-06-en

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Music Sources:

Cry of My Heart, *The Worship Hymnal* #526; CCLI #844980

The Greatest Thing, *The Worship Hymnal* #527; CCLI #11500

Everlasting God, *The Worship Hymnal* #121; CCLI #4556538

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***Prayer – Talking with God in Life's Worst Situations*****Focal Text**

Psalm 3:1-8; 4:1-8; 71:1-5, 19-22

Background Text

Psalm 3, 4, 71

Main Idea

No life situation is so desperate that the believer cannot call to God for help.

Question to Explore

Do we live our lives with the understanding that no life situation is too desperate for us to call upon God for help?

Teaching Aim

Help participants to live lives so completely in communion with God that calling upon Him in desperate times is the most natural thing to do.

Gathering together:

Sing

Cry of My Heart, *The Worship Hymnal* #526; CCLI #844980

First thoughts:

The prophet Jeremiah spent a lifetime warning the kings of Judah of the coming danger to Judah and Israel if the people did not repent and return to God. He prophesied during the rule of three different kings of Judah, but not one of them would repent and turn back to God. Then eventual result of this disobedience was the capture of both Israel and Judah by the Babylonians. His unpopular message resulted in his imprisonment.

While the prophet Jeremiah was still confined in the courtyard of the guard, the word of the Lord came to him a second time: "This is what the Lord says, He who

made the earth, the Lord who formed it and established it - the Lord is His name: 'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know'” Jeremiah 33:1-3

Although it might be hard to understand, there are times that God allows us to get into certain situations so that He can speak to us. Jeremiah was only doing what God called him to do, but in Jeremiah 33 he still ended up in a “confined area in the courtyard of the guard”. God reminded Jeremiah that even though he might not fully comprehend why he was imprisoned, He was the One ***“who made heaven and earth and established it.”***

In other words, we need always to remember that God is still in control in what might seem to be an uncontrollable circumstance. But even as Jeremiah is confined to the courtyard, God tells him if he will call to Him that He would answer and tell him great and unsearchable things he did not know. Wow! God wants to get our attention not by simply putting us in “time out”, but by bringing us to a place where the only thing we can do is listen to what He is saying. So even if you are in a very difficult situation now, make sure you are listening to the Lord. He wants to tell you things that you cannot even begin to imagine.¹

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

¹ Kyle Mack Smith, Pastor, Immanuel Baptist Church, Pittsburg, TX.

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Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

Prayer – Talking with God in Life’s Worst Situations

Focal Text

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Introduction to your personal study:

The background for Psalm 3 is the conflict between King David and his son Absalom (2 Samuel chapters 15-19). Absalom revolted and attempted to kill David. David ran away rather than fight. One evening during that time he wrote this prayer to God. He wanted God to show his enemies, Absalom and his army, that God was on his side. God’s answer brought happiness and peace to David so he could sleep. God’s peace means that one need not fear down deep inside.

The Apostle Paul wrote an encouraging word to the Corinthian church that is a good verse to simplify what David wrote. 1 Corinthians 10:13. ***No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you***

be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

It is the way out that David writes about in the psalms you will study. The outstanding way is through believing prayer.

The theme of psalm 3 is faith in God. It is He who hears the prayers of believers and protects them from evil. It was a psalm used in worship by those in distress. Our Father in heaven is waiting to hear from His children in times of distress.

Psalm 3 leads one to psalm 4 which is a plea for help and an affirmation of strong personal faith. No matter the circumstances one finds in life when one goes to God in sincere faith he will find a source of comfort and peace.

Psalm 71 is a very personal psalm written when the author was an old man. It is a prayer of lament, confession, and praise.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series (Bible Teaching #....) of Bible Study and Worship sessions. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

Focusing on the Meaning:

Psalm 3:1-8. LORD YOU ARE MY SHIELD.

1. His Anxiety.

1 LORD, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me!

2 Many are saying of me, “God will not deliver him.”

David uses LORD which means YAHWEH in Hebrew. The psalm begins with David's lament. He finds himself surrounded by mocking enemies. Absalom had promised every man would receive justice and people flocked to his banner (2 Samuel 15:4-5).

He hears their taunts. They were saying that God had abandoned him. At the time there was little hope that God would save David. They turned against the leadership of David.

2. His Confidence.

3 But you, LORD, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high.

4 I call out to the LORD, and he answers me from his holy mountain.

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Prayer – Talking with God in Life's Worst Situations – 25-52-06-en

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David is undaunted. He knows that the Lord will be as a shield for his protection. Shield means to hide. He looks up because the Lord is with him. It is the Lord who will restore his throne and his dignity.

The dejected and depressed look down. God is the one who encourages His children and thus they look up, not down. God's followers "walk tall". When David speaks of glory here he is saying God is with him.

David is confident that He hears every prayer made and He answers. The "holy mountain" is Mt. Zion. It harkens back to the days of the Exodus when God's glory filled the Tabernacle.

3. His Troubles.

5 I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustains me.

6 I will not fear though tens of thousands assail me on every side.

What peace. David can sleep without a worry though tens of thousands of the enemy come against him on every side. He had faith in the protection of the Lord.

4. His Call for Help.

7 Arise, LORD! Deliver me, my God! Strike all my enemies on the jaw; break the teeth of the wicked.

8 From the LORD comes deliverance. May your blessing be on your people.

Dealing with this difficult passage:

From the perspective of the coming of Jesus a thousand years after David wrote these words, we can and should think carefully about applying them to today's world. Jesus was quite harsh regarding those of his day who still promoted the "justice" teachings of King David's world. Read Matthew 5 and 6 in context with the rest of Jesus' teaching and sacrifice of his own life. His commands to love and forgive and pray for your enemies are astounding in the face of some Old Testament (and Jewish cultural) acceptance of retribution without mercy—an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth—and expecting God to carry out their desire and demand for retribution and punishment.

Some Christian groups are known for their passivism in the face of aggression. Others go toward the opposite with justification of military action against almost any injustice in the world. How to relate such passages that we find in Psalms and other Old Testament books to our need today for stopping terrorism and all sorts of despicable acts must be done in the midst of much fervent prayer and as close adherence to the teachings of Jesus as the situation and its consequences will allow.

When all is said and done, all such teachings as we see in Psalms 3 must be analysed through the eyes of our Lord Jesus Christ. No other option can even be considered. "What would Jesus do" is still a very relevant question for every decision we make. How or why God related as He did with His Jewish people 3,000 years ago may be a question that must await clear answers until we can ask it before our Lord in Heaven at the "end of the age".

"Arise, O Lord!" might have been the battle cry of Israel. With a heart at peace and with his faith strong David prays for God's deliverance or salvation. Strike their jaw. Break their teeth. David has complete confidence in God's ability. God does not just listen. He acts. He delivers.

David concludes with a benediction. Bless Your people. He does not think only of himself. He wants good things for the people, too.

This is an encouraging word for those who are in the midst of danger to trust the Lord. Sleep soundly, God is in control.

Psalm 4:1-8. David's Confident Faith.

This psalm and the one before it may have been dealing with the same crisis. The message of this psalm is this:

"Having cried out to God for help, the psalmist warns his enemies not to sin against God by wronging him; because God had set him apart in protective care, a fact that caused him to rejoice in the face of opposition".²

1 Answer me when I call to you, my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

David cries out to God who has helped out before. When he was in a tight place before, God gave him room. He is in trouble again and needs God's mercy. God hears David's prayers. In reality David's enemies are not fighting him, they are fighting God.

2 How long will you people turn my glory into shame? How long will you love delusions and see false gods?

3 Know that the LORD has set apart his faithful servant for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him.

In verse two David may have been thinking about Absalom's attempt to tarnish David's reputation (2 Samuel 15:3).

² John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament*, Victor Books, pg. 794.

The psalmist was being ridiculed by people who had no time for spiritual matters. They were indifferent to God. They loved “delusions” which were material things which may have been important but would not satisfy the hungering of their souls. Some translations for “false gods” have “lies” instead.

David, not Absalom, was chosen by God. Those who belong to the Lord call upon Him and He hears and responds. The psalmist is committed to the Lord. David was an object of God’s love. He was different from his enemies.

4 Tremble and do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.

5 Offer the sacrifices of the righteous and trust in the LORD.

Tremble and do not sin is translated also ***Be angry, and sin not*** (KJV). The Apostle Paul quotes this verse in Ephesians 4:26 (KJV). Nursing one’s anger is self-destructive. It is better to meditate on the things of God while lying quietly in bed.

The call is for David’s enemies to abandon their plans and become worshippers of the Lord. Apparently their worship was inadequate. He counsels offering the right sacrifices which means “kill animals on the temple altar”. Trusting in the Lord would signal a change in the worship that shows their standing is in a right relationship with God.

6 Many, LORD, are asking, “Who will bring us prosperity?” Let the light of your face shine on us.

7 Fill my heart with joy when their grain and new wine abound.

Verse 6 may refer to discontented people who followed David. If someone else came along with better prospects they would follow him.

The Hebrew believed that one who was successful and prosperous had the favor of God. Apparently their crops, herds, and businesses were not successful. Where will they turn? What they looked for was a success cult. With that in mind, faith is of little use in tough times.

David responds to their question with a prayer for blessing. God would satisfy their complaint and make His face to shine upon them.

Verse seven finds the psalmist joyful even in the time of adversity. His joy was greater than those whose crops abounded.

Joy is an inner gladness that not brought on by eternal circumstances. It is grounded in a relationship with the Lord.

8 In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me dwell in safety.

He not only had joy he had peace. He could sleep soundly knowing the Lord was protecting him.

How well do you sleep at night?

Words from an Elder. Psalm 71:1-5; 19-22

As I write this background material I am 75 years old. This psalm speaks to me for it is written by an old man (see vs. 71:5). Let it speak to your heart too.

1 In you, LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame.

2 In your righteousness, rescue me and deliver me; turn your ear to me and save me.

3 Be my rock of refuge, to which I can always go; give the command to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress.

4 Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of those who are evil and cruel.

The author of this psalm is unknown.

Verses 1 through 4 is a prayer for help from the Lord. There is no age limit or expiration date for praying. The author had put his trust in God. His plea is “do not ever let me doubt the choice”.

God is always right. He always does the right thing. So the author calls for deliverance and rescue. He calls for God to hear and save.

The Lord is solid like a rock. He is always there. He is a refuge or place in which to hide. Because of who He is He can command and it will be done.

The author voices the prayer of all God’s children who are persecuted. Deliver me.

5 For you have been my hope, Sovereign LORD, my confidence since my youth.

The author placed his hope and confidence in the Lord since he was young. He declares the sovereignty of God who has the right to do what He pleases.

19 Your righteousness, God, reaches to the heavens, you who have done great things. Who is like you, God?

20 Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up.

21 you will increase my honor and comfort me once more.

First he extols the character of God. He is righteous. He is everywhere. The question “Who is like you” is found in several places in the Psalms.

Then the writer applauds all the things God has done. Though life has not been without bitter troubles, God will keep him alive. He will “honor and comfort” is faith looking forward based on the experiences of the writer.

22 I will praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, my God; I will sing and praise to you with the lyre, Holy One of Israel.

Praise rings forth from the writer because of the faithfulness of God experienced by the writer. Praise is accompanied by stringed instruments. “Holy One of Israel” is used frequently in the Book of Isaiah but occurs only three times in the Psalms.

It does not matter what one’s age is, one can praise God for one’s walk thus far.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

Help participants to live lives so completely in communion with God that calling upon Him in desperate times is the most natural thing to do.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

Prayer – Talking with God in Life's Worst Situations

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

Psalm 3:1-8; 4:1-8; 71:1-5, 19-22

Background Text

Psalm 3, 4, 71

Main Idea

No life situation is so desperate that the believer cannot call to God for help.

Question to Explore

Do we live our lives with the understanding that no life situation is too desperate for us to call upon God for help?

Teaching Aim

Help participants to live lives so completely in communion with God that calling upon Him in desperate times is the most natural thing to do.

Connect with Life:

Ask: How many of you have had trouble raising your children? What kinds of issues did you face? Did you seek God's help?

Guide the Study:

Tell the group: There are three psalms in our study today. Psalm 3 is about faith in God. Psalm 4 contains a plea for help and a strong affirmation of faith. Psalm 71 contains a lament, confession, and praise from an aged man.

LORD, YOU ARE MY SHIELD.

Ask for a volunteer to read Psalm 3:1-8.

Ask: Have you ever been taunted? Have you ever been taunted because of your faith.

Say: Absalom and his followers kept saying to David, "God will not deliver you".

Tell them: It takes a strong person to stand up to taunts and jeers.

Ask: What was David's defense? (God was his shield. God lifted up his head. God answered his prayers.)

Question your group: Can you lay down and sleep with the knowledge that the Lord sustains you?

DAVID'S CONFIDENT FAITH.

Ask for a volunteer to read Psalm 4:1-8.

Tell the group This psalm deals with the same crisis as psalm 3. He has cried out to God for help now he warns his enemies not to sin against God.

Inquire: Does your past experience walking with God strengthen your present faith? God had gotten David out of trouble before and David believed He could do it again (v. 1).

Have the group look at vs. 2-3.

Seek an answer: Whom did God choose as king, David or Absalom?

Say: The battle to take the throne away from David was not just a battle against David, but against God.

Have the group notice vs. 4-5.

Say: David was calling them to repent and offer proper sacrifices to God.

Be sure the group gets the message in v. 6.

Add: Do not follow the person who proclaims a "prosperity" religion. Money or poverty and health or illness do not depend on how much faith we have. That is a false belief.

Say: David acts as if he had heard Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. He prays for all to be blessed, both his friends and his enemies (v. 7).

Then say: David could then lie down in peace under the protection of God.

Poll the group: How many of you are as confident as David in the protection and blessing of God?

Words from an Elder. Psalm 71:1-5; 19-22.

Request a volunteer to read Psalm 71:1-5.

Ask: What are some qualities or characteristics the psalmist ascribes to God?

A rock of refuge.

Righteousness.

A fortress.

Always there when needed.

Then ask: What does the psalmist want from God? (Deliverance)

Continue with: Do you need deliverance? From what?

Ask: If you want God to deliver you, what must you be willing to do? (Trust Him)

Ask: How long had the psalmist been trusting God? (Since his youth)

Follow up with: Who among you has followed the Lord the longest?

Ask for a volunteer to read Psalm 71:19-22.

Make sure they notice: **"Who, O God is like you"?** Is there anyone to compare?

Say: Carefully consider verses 20-21. Though the psalmist had seen troubles he was confident that God would restore his life, increase his honor, and comfort him once more. Life is not without its troubles. For those who trust Him God is there to see them through it.

Finish with: What a wonderful thing it is to come to the later years, having experienced trouble and deliverance to give praise to God.

Ask: What is the attribute of God that caused the psalmist to praise Him? (Faithfulness)

Finally: With this lesson behind us, is there any situation in life too desperate for us to call upon God?

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Encourage Application:

Ask if there are any situations among the group that needs the intervention of God. Take time to pray for those situations.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

YOUTH!!! TAKE TEN

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

Prayer – Talking with God in Life's Worst Situations

Psalm 3:1-8; 4:1-8; 71:1-5, 19-22

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

A Clue to Peaceful Sleep

In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me dwell in safety. (Psalms 3:8)

Young people are often warned against keeping their cell phones on at night. Incoming text messages or calls may interrupt good sleep. Watching television or working on the computer immediately before going to bed can have a negative effect as well. The light from a laptop or desktop can interrupt sleep. The growing body and developing brain of the teenager needs sleep. Verse 8 of Psalm 3 is a good one to memorize and say to oneself when sleep doesn't come.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Prayer – Talking with God in Life's Worst Situations*****Psalm 3:1-8; 4:1-8; 71:1-5, 19-22****Beginning the Service:**

Sing these songs or others which are meaningful to your group.

The Greatest Thing, *The Worship Hymnal* #527; CCLI #11500
Everlasting God, *The Worship Hymnal* #121; CCLI #4556538

Offering:**Praying for the World:**

In the summer and fall of 2015, a refugee crisis faced the world. Thousands of people were fleeing from the conflict in Syria and in other parts of the Mideast. Many lives were lost in the difficult crossing of the Mediterranean. The countries of Europe and indeed all the countries of the world were asked to accept these refugees and help them settle in new homes. The difficulties of language, work, and different customs faced the refugees. Pray that Christians will be doing our part and more to help these people. Pray that Christ can be shared with those with whom Christians minister.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

GOD IS WAITING ON US

Deuteronomy 4:23-31

23 Be careful not to forget the covenant of the LORD your God that he made with you; do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the LORD your God has forbidden. 24 For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. 25 After you have had children and grandchildren and have lived in the land a long time---if you then become corrupt and make any kind of idol, doing evil in the eyes of the LORD your God and arousing his anger, 26 I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you this day that you will quickly perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess. You will not live there long but will certainly be destroyed. 27 The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and only a few of you will survive among the nations to which the LORD will drive you. 28 There you will worship man-made gods of wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or smell. 29 But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul. 30 When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the LORD your God and obey him. 31 For the LORD your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy or forget the covenant with your ancestors, which he confirmed to them by oath.

When you are at the bottom of your pit, the only way out is up. In the darkest hour there is a way back to God. It is provided by Him. No one gets His help unless one asks for it. God is waiting for us to want Him. That was true for Israel and it is true for us.

Sometime around 1700 B.C. Joseph led his family into Egypt. They remained for about 400 years. Their hope was to one day return to Palestine. This happened about 1250 B.C. In 1000 B.C. David reigns as king of Judah. Jerusalem is destroyed in 586 B.C. and the Babylonian Captivity begins. 70 years later they return and stay in the land until the Romans destroy the Temple in 70 A.D.

Times are tough. It is during the toughest of times that faith is needed the most. A change of direction must be made. Someone has said, "Change comes when continuing on in the same direction is more painful than changing directions." That is where the alcoholic has to find himself; the drug addict has to find himself; the lost person has to find himself; and the backslidden child of God has to find himself. Until that happens, no change takes place. Until you decide that God is what you need and faith in Him is all important, you will not choose faith in Christ.

God is waiting for you and for me to say that we want a change.

I. REMEMBER YOUR VOW (v. 23).

23 Be careful not to forget the covenant of the LORD your God that he made with you; do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the LORD your God has forbidden.

Every believer made a vow to God when he/she said yes to Jesus. It was a vow to put Jesus at the center of their life. They turned their backs on the world. However, there are some who have looked back and are worshiping idols instead of God.

The children of Israel would have trouble remembering these words of Moses. For some 1250 years they would go back and forth in their faith. They would follow some good leaders and then they would choose to do what was right in their own eyes. Most of those years were spent in worship of something other than Jehovah, the real God.

Be careful what you make number one in your life. If anything other than God becomes number one you are guilty of idolatry.

Vows are a common part of life. Some are minutely documented. Some are made with a handshake. Just as they are meant to be kept so is one's vow to God.

II. GOD IS JEALOUS (vs. 24-28).

24 For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. 25 After you have had children and grandchildren and have lived in the land a long time---if you then become corrupt and make any kind of idol, doing evil in the eyes of the LORD your God and arousing his anger, 26 I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you this day that you will quickly perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess. You will not live there long but will certainly be destroyed. 27 The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and only a few of you will survive among the nations to which the LORD will drive you. 28 There you will worship man-made gods of wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or smell.

God said He would not bless a disobedient people. If they go after idols calamity will befall them. Some will perish. Some will go into exile. Only a few will survive.

Nowhere in Scripture does it say God promises to bless disobedience. He is "a consuming fire". He is like a raging forest fire that consumes everything in its path.

This Scripture about God is as important as the Scripture that says "God is love". Without understanding the wrath of God one would not see how great the love of God is.

Parents jealously guard their families, so God jealously guards His relationship with his children.

III. GOD IS FOUND BY THOSE WHO SEEK HIM (vs. 29-30).

29 But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul. 30 When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the LORD your God and obey him.

When you get to the end of your rope, God is waiting. When all the stresses of life get you down, He is there. The task is simple. Seek Him. You have to quit having your own way.

This passage is a good example of repentance. "You cannot repent too soon, because you do not know how soon it may become too late." (from Sermon Central) "Repentance is always difficult, and the difficulty grows greater with delay." (Samuel Johnson, Sermon Central)

When tribulation comes, and it will, you will turn to the Lord and be obedient. Tribulation is one of God's tools to get us to see our need for Him. The prodigal son learned this lesson. When he returned home he found his father waiting to receive him.

IV. GOD IS MERCIFUL (v. 31).

31 For the LORD your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy or forget the covenant with your ancestors, which he confirmed to them by oath.

Mercy literally means that God is walking with us. That is a great quality of God we all need. We do not deserve mercy, but God is merciful and will not forsake you and me and destroy us. Just as He remembered the covenant He made with Abraham and Israel, He will remember the new covenant He made with us through Jesus.

God is not guilty of turning back. You and I are.

There would come a time in the history of Israel that their pursuit of idols would result in their being taken into captivity. But, that would not end them as a people. They would be restored as a nation. For that to happen there had to be repentance, restoration, and a return to God.

That was true for Israel and it is true for everyone else. It is true for us today, as individuals, families, and even nations.

CONCLUSION

Repent. Turn. Admit that you need help.

Restore. Restore the obedience you had. Put away those things that come between you and God.

Return to God. Seek Him and you will find Him.

Call to Commitment:

Understand this, if you and I were to get anything but mercy we would die. God's wrath is not poured out on us who are recipients of God's grace. That wrath was poured out upon the Son of God as He hung on the cross.

"God's grace is magnified by man's ruin. The more keenly the ruin is felt, the more highly the grace is valued." The most joyful converts to Christ you will ever see, are the ones who have come to realize how utterly lost and helpless they were without Him.
(SOURCE: C. H. MacKintosh)

If there are a thousand steps between us and God, he will take all but one. He will leave the final one for us. The choice is ours. (from Max Lucado, Leadership).

If this is your need, take that first step today.

Concluding the Service:

The people of ancient Ireland had many special prayers which are still remembered today. Let's conclude our worship time with one that is over 1,000 years old but still fresh and meaningful. Please stand and bow your heads as we pray to our Lord and Saviour.

**You are the peace of all things calm
You are the place to hide from harm
You are the light that shines in dark
You are the heart's eternal spark
You are the door that's open wide
You are the guest who waits inside
You are the stranger at the door
You are the calling of the poor
You are my Lord and with me still
You are my love, keep me from ill**

**You are the light, the truth, the way
You are my Saviour this very day.
Amen.**

Celtic oral tradition - 1st millennium